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Xavier Gonzalez

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XAVIER GONZALEZ

A Thesis

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Master of Arts

in

The School of Art

by

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Abstract

This essay analyzes a sampling of Xavier Gonzalez's paintings and murals, and examines the connections between Gonzalez and Pablo Picasso through journals and notes by Gonzalez himself.

Gonzalez's career as an artist spanned decades, during which he explored many different types of media. His watercolors draw upon a Cubist legacy and integrate geometric elements within his realist subject matter. Gonzalez's murals for the New Orleans Lakefront Airport feature sweeping scenes of flight that capture the modern experience. The murals represent the apex of Gonzalez's career as an artist working in public spaces, though they later faded into oblivion as the airport lost its luster. Gonzalez's later paintings from the 1940s and 1950s engage emotionalism and humanism, and operate on multiple levels of meaning.

From Gonzalez's own notes, one can gain insight into how the influences and observations of Pablo Picasso aided him to define his work and his approach to art in general. Both natives of Spain, Picasso and Gonzalez shared an aversion to reading about or critiquing art. Instead, Gonzalez relied on his observations of other artists, such as Picasso and his wife Ethel Edwards.

In lieu of a definitive biography or catalogue raisonné of Gonzalez's art yet to be written, this essay should serve as starting point for further Gonzalez research to be undertaken in the future.

Chapter 1: Introduction

An accomplished mid-twentieth century modernist artist working in many media, including oil painting, watercolor, murals, sculpture, and drawing, Xavier Gonzalez has remained largely ignored by art historians. To this date no retrospective exhibition of his work has been held and no definitive text has been published about his contributions. This thesis will uncover specifically his role in bringing the aesthetics and ideas of the international artistic avant-garde to the state of Louisiana, where his artistic career began in the 1920s. In painting alone, the creative record of Gonzalez (Fig. 1) has been long and significant, with contributions spanning more than seventy years. Explaining his philosophy and working method, Gonzalez stated that:

During the summer months, I study nature, giving special attention to the humble things or less obvious expressions of physical appearances. My painting then becomes more emotional. I feel that in front of nature I am nothing but a tool and that my brain, eyes, and hand do the painting with a sort of automatism. In other words I try to act nature rather than copy or imitate it. During the winter, my work becomes more severe and calculating—like an interest in a kind of non-Euclidian mathematics. I aim toward certain orders and relationships in form and color.¹

This explanation emphasizes the balance between objective and subjective motivations which for Gonzalez is the ingredient of great art. Naturalist artists, according to Gonzalez, are similar to automata. Abstract artists, on the other hand, rely mostly on their inner resources, but even in the insistence of abstraction, their search for reality testifies to their concern with objective, even if invisible, truth.

¹ Ralph M. Pearson, *The Modern Renaissance in American Art: Presenting the Work and Philosophy of 54 Distinguished Artists* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 125.

Born in Almería, Spain, 1898, Xavier Gonzalez had a career that was varied and defined by frequent moves. His childhood was spent in Seville; he then left for Mexico with his family at age nine. Gonzalez came to the United States at age fifteen to work on the railroad tracks in Iowa. Soon, he found various jobs in Chicago, sometimes working in automats or pressing pants, sometimes designing window displays and lettering show cards for Carson Pirie Scott.² Meanwhile, he studied at night at the Chicago Art Institute from 1921 to 1923. His only other art training was in the mid-1920s with his uncle, José Arpa, a follower of nineteenth-century academic painters Meissonier and Bouguereau who painted flowers in Texas. Gonzalez taught art in Mexico in his own commercial art school and in the public school system along with Miguel Covarrubias and Rufino Tamayo around 1923-1924.

Covarrubias (1904-57) was a well-known Mexican artist, caricaturist, and costume- and set-designer who resided for most of his life in New York and Mexico City, where he became a celebrity. Although best known for his caricatures in *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, and elsewhere, Covarrubias was also a serious amateur ethnologist, anthropologist, and art historian who studied the Olmec Culture of pre-Columbian Mexico, as well as the ethnography of the island of Bali, where he lived for several years in the 1930s.³ His fellow countryman Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991) was a painter with a Zapotecan Indian background who, like Covarrubias, lived

² Martin Widdifield Gallery, *Paintings and Drawings: Ethel Edwards, Xavier Gonzalez, Jane Braswell Crawford, Louis Grebenak, Augustus Peck; Exhibition, November 8-December 5, 1956* (New York: The Spiral Press, 1956), 16.

³ For Covarrubias, see [Eva Maria Ayala, Juan Rafael Coronel Rivera, Selva Hernandez, Mercurio Lopez Casillas, Monica Lopez Velarde, Alfonso Miranda Marquez, Carlos Monsivais, Adriana Williams, *Miguel Covarrubias: 4 Visions* (D.F. Mexico: Editorial RM, 2007)]

mostly in Mexico City and New York, as well as in Paris. During the course of a very long career, Tamayo was influenced by a variety of modernist styles, including Fauvism, Cubism, and especially Surrealism, which he synthesized into an original, yet unmistakably Mexican, manner. His mature work also has a distinctly nationalistic dimension, expressing what he believed to be the quintessence of traditional Mexico but refusing to engage with contemporary politics in the way that such contemporaries as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros did. Like the Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros, however, some of Tamayo's most famous works are murals in Palacio de Bellas Artes, the great opera house of Mexico City.⁴

Gonzalez's association with the Mexican muralists affected his work, since, as he explained, "we all came under the influence of Aztec art, Spanish baroque, Chinese and Japanese art... I am influenced by everybody."⁵ Gonzalez moved back to the United States and settled in San Antonio and later, Alpine, Texas. He then was hired by Newcomb College of Tulane University in New Orleans, where he taught from 1929-1942. He was orally promised pay raises by the school of art, but correspondence in his file reveals that these raises never materialized, allegedly because of budget cuts owing to World War.⁶ Gonzalez took a leave of absence to study in Europe from 1933-1934 and again in 1937-1938. Caroline Durieux, who had spent time with Mexican muralists in years prior, also taught at Newcomb while

⁴ For Tamayo, see especially [Diana C. Du Pont, *Tamayo: A Modern Icon Reinterpreted*, (Paducah, Kentucky: Turner Publishing, 2007)]

⁵ "Versatile Blotter", *Time Magazine*, Henry Luce, ed., vol. LXIII, no. 12 (March 22, 1954), 27.

⁶ The Tulane University of Louisiana, Personnel file, Gonzalez, Xavier, Accession no. Newc(Cab. 4), VF (A).

Gonzalez was there. Born and raised in the French Quarter of New Orleans, Caroline Durieux became a nationally renowned painter and printmaker of social satire. She attended Newcomb College and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Carl Zigrosser of the Philadelphia Museum first encouraged Durieux to try lithography, for which she experimented with electron technology. While living in Mexico, Durieux worked with Diego Rivera and other Mexican masters before joining the art faculty at Newcomb College. She took over Gonzalez's classes during his leave of absence in 1937 to 1938.⁷ Stylistically, Durieux's and Gonzalez's art was very closely related during the inter-war years. While remaining grounded in the figurative, both artists took a page out of the book of Cubism, and for a while produced compositions with an Art Deco flavor to them.

While at Tulane, Gonzalez met and married Ethel Edwards. As a student at Newcomb College in New Orleans, where she was born, Ethel Edwards was first a pupil and then the wife of Gonzalez, whom she married in her sophomore year. She had always painted from childhood on, partly because of the influence of a great-uncle who had studied with Arpa, the uncle of Gonzalez. She continued painting and studying as a special student at the college after her marriage and traveled to Europe and Mexico with her husband. She had numerous subsequent gallery showings and exhibitions, and made illustrations for Oscar Wilde's *Happy Prince*, which were later shown at the Museum of Modern Art.⁸ Edwards' work often was

⁷ Claudia Kheel, "Louisiana Art in the Early to Mid-Twentieth Century", *Collecting Passions: Highlights from the LSU Museum of Art Collection* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: LSU Museum of Art, 2005), 60.

⁸ Martin Widdifield Gallery, 14.

exhibited alongside her husband's, and sometimes they shared shows.⁹ Gonzalez's tenure at Newcomb College was interrupted by the Second World War, during which he took a position with the Office of Civilian Defense, making a series of war posters for the Office of War Information.¹⁰ After World War II, he resumed teaching at the Brooklyn Museum Art School in 1942. "Association with youth," Gonzalez said, "their challenging inquiries, their refusal to take things for granted and my attempts to answer them, constitute a decidedly stimulating situation."¹¹ Subsequently, Gonzalez operated his own art school in Wellfleet, Cape Cod, and maintained a permanent studio in New York City after 1942.¹² For financial reasons, however, he could never devote all his time to painting, despite being a professional artist.

Particularly in the 1930s, many avant-garde artists sympathized with radical liberal positions, though not all identified themselves openly as Communists as, for instance, Picasso did. Gonzalez associated with the avant-garde and shared some of their political outlooks, but whether he considered himself a left-wing radical remains unclear. In an interview conducted for this thesis, his brother-in-law, Bruce Edwards, vehemently denied that Gonzalez ever had involvement with Communism.¹³ Yet, ties with his birthplace made for an instant camaraderie with Pablo Picasso, which the Spanish Civil War surely deepened even further. Gonzalez, unlike artists and intellectuals like Joan Miró or André Malraux, did not fight in the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The Tulane University of Louisiana, Personnel file, Gonzalez, Xavier.

¹¹ Pearson, 125.

¹² San Antonio Art League, ed., *Watercolors and Caseins by Xavier Gonzalez, Watercolors by Richard Brough: October 14th to 28th, 1951* (San Antonio, Texas: Witte Art Museum, 1951), 1.

¹³ Bruce Edwards, Interview, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), December 10, 2008. Generously, Bruce Edwards granted me access to otherwise inaccessible information through personal family archives.

Spanish Civil War. Oddly, even when he met Picasso at the height of the Spanish Civil War in Paris, the political trials of their homeland do not seem to have been an issue.

Gonzalez was often referred to by fellow artists as an “artist’s artist,” which means that only fellow artists understood the complexity and depth of his artistic practice and how it was based on the profound, self-taught study of the past.¹⁴ Until his death in 1993, Gonzalez’s paintings grew out of dark underpainting, used chiaroscuro effects, and contained symbols both real and dreamlike. His paintings are based on observations of himself or the life around him. His watercolors, however, were very different: joyful, colorful, spontaneous expressions showing the deftness of his hand, full of wit and charm, sometimes robust and then sometimes serene.

¹⁴ Sidney Simon, *The Century Association Yearbook 1994* (New York: Martin Cook Associates, 1994), 267-77.

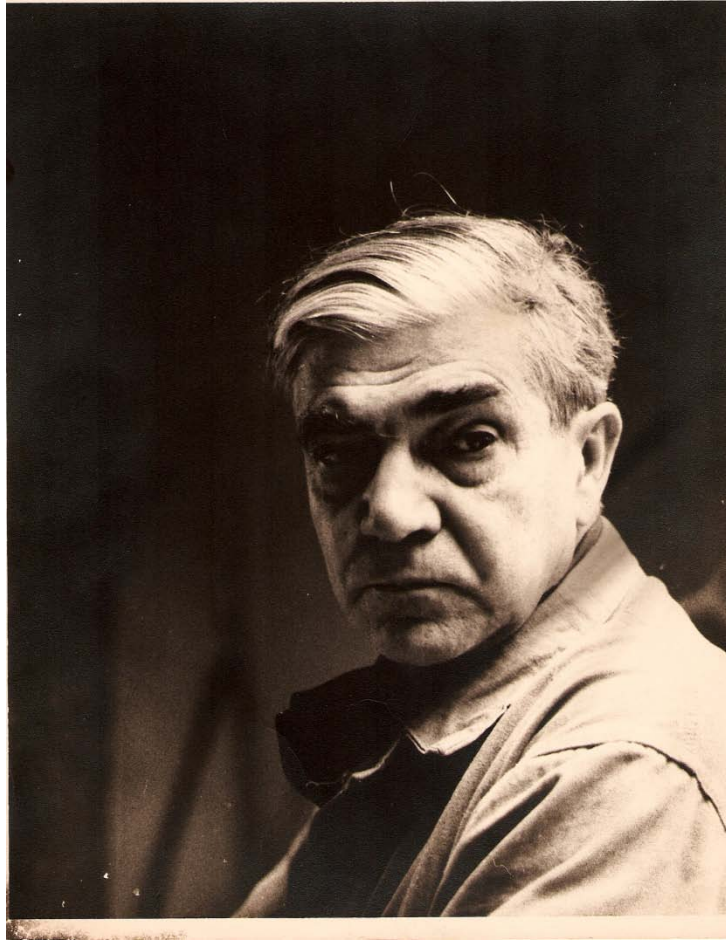


Fig. 1 Ethel Edwards, Photograph of Xavier Gonzalez, c. 1960. Image: private collection of Bruce Edwards.

Chapter 2: Lakefront Airport Murals

Gonzalez had come to Tulane University in 1929, at a time when the state of Louisiana made plans to build a new airport near Lake Ponchartrain. Subsequently, he secured the commission of eight murals for the airport. Undoubtedly, the prestige associated with working for Tulane University and the political connections this job afforded were instrumental in Gonzalez's realizing the largest and most ambitious artistic project of his career.

For Shushan (now Lakefront) Airport in New Orleans (Fig. 2), opened in 1934, Gonzalez envisioned imagery outlining the development of aviation and its influence on modern civilization in eight wall murals mounted on the mezzanine (Figs. 3 and 4). The airport was erected under the direction of former governor Huey P. Long, U.S. senator for Louisiana from 1932 to 1935. Notorious for both his corruption and his popular appeal, Long managed to keep tight control over the state through his puppet, Governor Oscar K. Allen, and pursued numerous ambitious construction campaigns, which included the Shushan Airport. Begun in a quest to be the first and finest structure of its kind, and executed with the same urgency – by the same architectural firm – as the new thirty-four story Louisiana State Capitol building, Shushan Airport would become its namesake's legacy.¹⁵ Abe Shushan, Orleans Levee Board President, was a close ally of Long's, and the naming was an honor for his outstanding service to Long's administration. The airport was renamed the New Orleans Airport in the aftermath of Shushan's arrest for

¹⁵ Vincent Caire, "Xavier Gonzales and the New Orleans' Shushan Airport Murals", *Louisiana Cultural Vistas: History, Culture, Literature, Arts*, vol. 17, no. 4, (Winter 2006-07), 57.

corruption for misappropriation of funds shortly after Long's assassination in 1935. It later took the name New Orleans Lakefront Airport.

Gonzalez was selected for the task of creating a series of murals for the Art Deco terminal building in a competition held by the architectural firm of Weiss, Dreyfous, and Seiferth. By all accounts, Shushan and the architects gave Gonzalez comfortable leeway on how to interpret the theme of aerial transportation's increasing influence on humanity.¹⁶ "Xavier certainly did his homework," Edwards remembers. "I recall a discussion when I was a young boy, and he had just married my sister Ethel; he talked about having been flying, and taking flying lessons to get a feel for what was going to be in those murals."¹⁷

Gonzalez selected and prepared a series of eight separate paintings, each measuring 10 feet by 10 feet, with two murals on each of the four walls encircling the grand balcony of the lobby. Starting from the northeast corner of the balcony, the clockwise sequence of subjects was: *New York Metropolis*, *Paris and the Lindbergh Landing* (Fig. 5), *Egypt* (Fig. 7), *Rio de Janeiro* (Fig. 11), *Admiral Richard Byrd's Flight over the South Pole* (Fig. 8), *Mayan Ruins* (Fig. 6), *Bali* (Fig. 10), and *Mount Everest*. Each mural was placed in a geographically accurate orientation synchronized with a large, oversized mosaic floor compass on the first floor, which was visible from the upper balcony. The Lindbergh mural, for instance, directed viewer's eyes northeast to Paris, New York north to its namesake, and the Mayan Ruins were oriented to the south.

¹⁶ Ibid., 60.

¹⁷ Edwards, December 10, 2008.

Gonzalez painted in murals in a technique known as marouflage, in which canvas is fastened to a solid support, such as a wall or synthetic board. The canvas appears to be permanently fixed to the support, as if paint were directly applied to the wall. Marouflage is also used to conserve and restore damaged or fragile works of art that would otherwise be unsalvageable. The mural paintings for Shushan Airport were completed in Gonzalez's studio on Carrollton Avenue in Uptown New Orleans. Once prepared, the canvases were transported to the Shushan terminal building and permanently attached to the walls in their Art Deco frames.¹⁸

In 1964, the Shushan terminal underwent a major renovation that resulted in Gonzalez's paintings being covered up from public view by paneling. The renovation took place on the 30th anniversary of the opening of the building and was supposed to celebrate the re-launch of the Orleans Levee Board. As part of the "renovation," plaster, concrete and metal plates were put on the Art Deco exterior. Inside, a false floor was constructed enclosing the balcony over the lobby. A hastily added second floor office suite was put in place of the former atrium where passengers and their companions used to contemplate the wonders of flight in Gonzalez's eight murals, making several paintings inaccessible to the public.¹⁹

Paris and the Lindbergh Landing (Fig. 5) depicts the first non-stop solo flight from New York City to Paris in 1927. Gonzalez incorporated the Eiffel Tower in the center of the mural, with two spotlights crossing their beams below the "Spirit of St. Louis" and other escort aircraft. The gargoyle in the foreground of the composition

¹⁸ Caire, 60.

¹⁹ Ibid., 61.

is an Art Deco adaptation of a medieval architectural element; this particular artifact was perhaps inspired by the gargoyles on the facade at Notre Dame de Paris.

Mayan Ruins (Fig. 6) shows an ancient step-pyramid of the Maya people, with a traditional figure stele in the foreground. The vegetation is lush and almost overgrows the stele. A central pictorial element of the mural is an airplane depicted against a sun emanating stylized rays. The rays mimic the spotlights of the *Paris and the Lindbergh Landing* mural, since both transect the canvas with stripes of light. The sun also evokes the traditional Maya sun symbolism, in which rays are rendered as distinct lines.

The depiction of *Egypt* (Fig. 7) features two colossal seated pharaoh statues, possibly Rameses II, next to the Nile River. A biplane flies overhead, but homage is paid to ancient culture by the inclusion of two vessels in the foreground. The contrast between the new technology alluded to by the airplane and the old method of travel with the sailboats adds a romantic quality to the painting. Nostalgia for the past is not obsolete, since it is depicted as part of Egypt's exoticism. The scenery looks as though it has been painted from a point across the river, with an ancient column delineating the right-hand side of the picture plane.

Admiral Richard Byrd's Flight over the South Pole (Fig. 8) shows Admiral Byrd in his first expedition to the Antarctic involving two ships and three airplanes on their famous flight to the South Pole and back in 1929. The ship in the mural is rendered amongst broken-up ice and resembles an actual photograph taken during the expedition (Fig. 9).

Bali (Fig. 10) consists of a scene of Balinese women bathing in a lush tropical setting. Their exoticism is enhanced by their nudity, which alludes to their being part of a “primitive” culture. Conceptually, the composition can be compared to Gauguin’s South Sea works, in that a lush nature setting provides the backdrop for exotic nudity and otherness.

Three of the murals, *Paris and the Lindbergh Landing*, *Mayan Ruins*, and *Egypt* were left exposed in private Levee Board offices. Prior to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, visitors to Levee Board offices could view and appreciate them. *New York Metropolis*, *Admiral Richard Byrd’s Flight over the South Pole*, and *Mount Everest* were covered up during the renovations that created new office space for the Levee Board staff. These paintings currently exist intact, although they are hidden behind a protective cover of beams and sheetrock. Thus, the specific iconography of *New York Metropolis* cannot be discussed, as there is no clear photographic record of the mural prior to its covering.

One of the eight Gonzalez murals originally painted for the Shushan Airport was removed from the wall during the remodeling of 1964. Entitled *Rio de Janeiro* (Fig. 11), it depicts the Italian seaplane “Santa Maria” flying over the Brazilian city. The mural was hanging unstretched in the stairwell of the Visual Arts storage at the Presbytere, part of the Louisiana State Museum, from 1976 to 2005, when it was rolled up and transferred to a conservator. It is unknown where the painting was located during the twelve years from 1964, when it was removed from the wall, to 1976, at which time it was donated to the Louisiana State Museum by the Orleans Parish Levee Board. The mural is rumored to have hung in a politician’s home

during that time. Because it had been striplined, the mural was likely stretched and hung improperly during that period.²⁰

The whereabouts of the *Bali* mural remain a mystery. Some rumors say it was accidentally destroyed during the 1964 renovation. Other anecdotes suggest it was removed in similar fashion to the *Rio de Janeiro* mural, but unlike its counterpart was not entrusted to the care of the state museum. If this version were true, then perhaps the *Bali* mural will surface again one day to complete the set.²¹

Edwards recalls some comments by Gonzalez on the fate of his paintings following the 1964 renovation of the terminal lobby, reflecting his disappointment that his works could no longer be appreciated as a complete set.²² Throughout his life, Gonzalez became familiar with the constantly changing face of politics and how it affected the fate of publicly commissioned art. He lived through a time of political turmoil in Europe, Mexico, and South America, as well as the United States. Understanding this fact of political life, he silently resigned himself to accepting the fate of the murals, since they had served the purpose for which they were originally designed, which was to celebrate the technological prowess of the 1930s.

²⁰ Beth Antoine, Visual Arts Curator, Louisiana State Museum, Curatorial File No. T0025.2002.

²¹ Caire, 62.

²² Edwards, December 10, 2008.



Fig. 2 Exterior view of Shushan Airport, c. 1935. Photo: Lakefront Airport Online Archives.



Fig. 3 Interior of Shushan Airport, c. 1935. Photo: Lakefront Airport Online Archives.



Fig. 4 Interior of Shushan Airport, c. 1935. Photo: Lakefront Airport Online Archives.



Fig. 5 Xavier Gonzalez, *Paris and the Lindbergh Landing*, 1934. Oil on cotton duck, 10 ft. x 10 ft., New Orleans Lakefront Airport, New Orleans, Louisiana.



Fig. 6 Xavier Gonzalez, *Mayan Ruins*, 1934. Oil on cotton duck, 10 ft. x 10 ft., New Orleans Lakefront Airport, New Orleans, Louisiana.

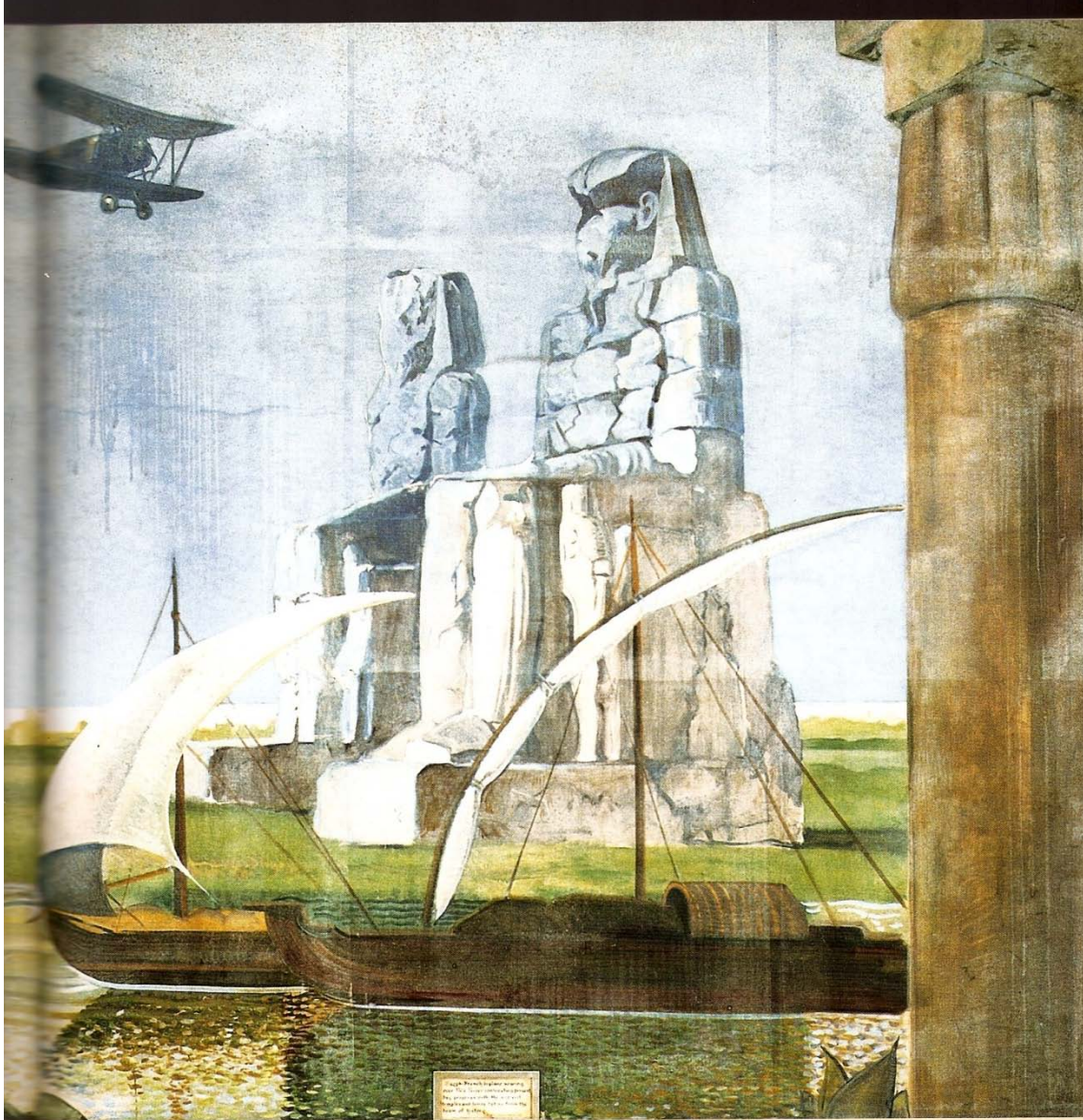


Fig. 7 Xavier Gonzalez, *Egypt*, 1934. Oil on cotton duck, 10 ft. x 10 ft., New Orleans Lakefront Airport, New Orleans, Louisiana.

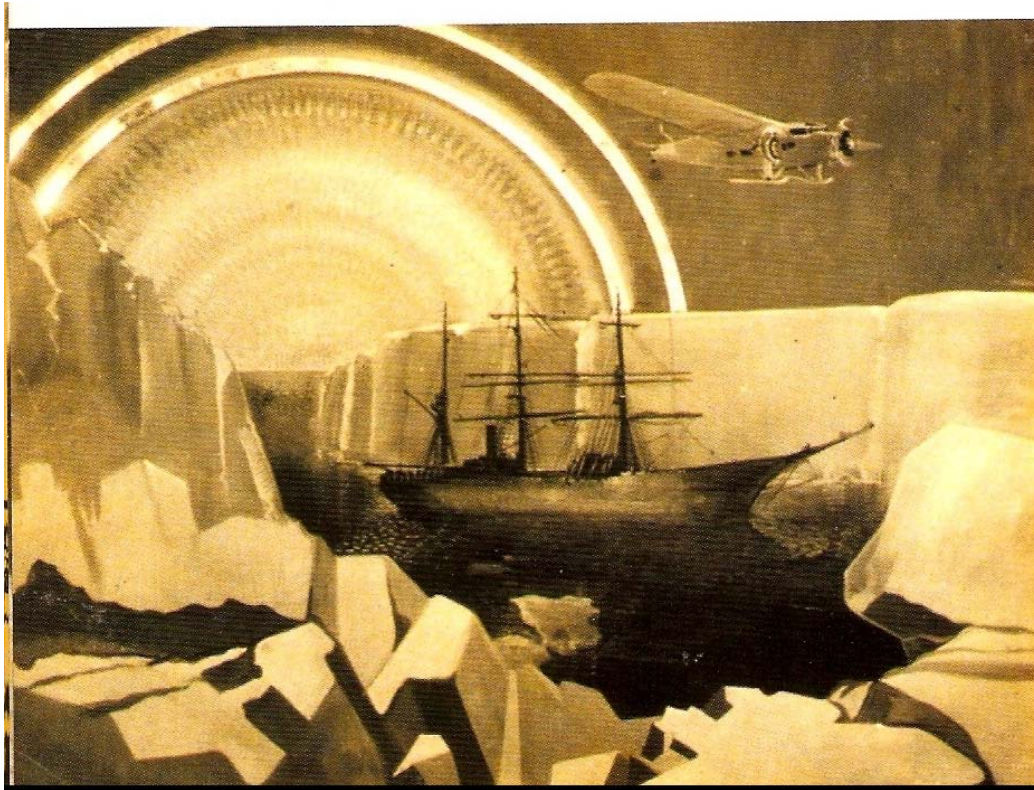


Fig. 8, Xavier Gonzalez, *Admiral Byrd's Flight over the South Pole*, 1934. Oil on cotton duck, 10 ft. x 10 ft., New Orleans Lakefront Airport, New Orleans, Louisiana. Image: Vincent Caire.



Fig. 9 *Expeditionsschiff Byrds*, Deutsches Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archive), Picture 102-09158, 1930.



Fig. 10 Xavier Gonzalez, *Bali* (partial view with artist), 1934. Oil on cotton duck, 10 ft. x 10 ft., location unknown. Image: Vincent Caire.



Fig. 11 Xavier Gonzalez, *Rio de Janeiro*, 1934. Oil on cotton duck, 10 ft. x 10 ft., Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana. Accession no. T0025.2002. Photo: Louisiana State Museum.

Chapter 3: Encounters with Picasso in 1936-1937

Sometime during the 1960s, Gonzalez gave his records to the Smithsonian Institution. They are now part of *The Papers of Latino and Latin American Artists* housed at the Archives of American Art.²³ These records include papers, correspondence, sketchbooks with notes, scrapbooks, around 200 photographs of Gonzalez and his friends' studios and works of art, notes and unpublished writings, and printed material.²⁴ Partially available to the public on microfilm, the notes from the 1930s include writings regarding Picasso. Gonzalez's "Notes of Paris, visits with Picasso, 1936-1937" provide a first-hand account of an encounter with his famous colleague, but contain little to suggest of an extended friendship. Hand-written, difficult to decipher, and mostly in Spanish, the notes also contain numerous sketches.

In the mid-1930s, a year or two after Edwards and Gonzalez were married, Gonzalez took a year's leave of absence from Newcomb College at Tulane University in New Orleans.²⁵ The couple spent the first six months in Paris, and the second six months in southern France, living and painting on the Mediterranean Coast. Once he arrived in Paris, according to Gonzalez's notes, he found Picasso's telephone number, called, and talked to Picasso himself. Gonzalez requested an appointment and Picasso agreed and suggested that they meet the next day at his studio at Rue des Grands Augustins, no. 17. Gonzalez describes the building in detail, even

²³ Archives of American Art, *The Papers of Latino and Latin American Artists*, 47. Xavier Gonzalez (1898-1993) (Washington, D.C.: Archives of American Art, 1996), 10. All translations from Spanish are by author.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The Tulane University of Louisiana, Personnel file, Gonzalez, Xavier.

sketching the stairwell up to the third floor. Picasso answered the door himself. Gonzalez mentions two impressions: first, Picasso was shorter than he anticipated and second, his eyes, noted for their intensity, were truly captivating.²⁶

A self-portrait and a pencil drawing of Picasso accompany sketches of an unidentified woman's head, different from Ethel Edwards. According to Bruce Edwards, Ethel's brother, the cartoon sketch of the lower legs of a man's quite rumpled trousers brought back memories of the "Xavier I knew from my earliest days."²⁷ The caption, in English, on a page entirely written in Spanish, reads: "I don't think he ever had a pair of pants wich [*sic*] had been pressed."²⁸ Edwards comments, "To me this was pure Gonzalez. If he could find humor, even at the expense of the man he considered the foremost artist of the time, he did so. Picasso was first a man, a pants wearing creature like himself, secondly a giant of twentieth-century art."²⁹

This observation of Picasso defined Gonzalez's approach to painting not as an artist, but as a human being, focusing on emotions in his works. This observation is specifically evident in the raw vulnerability of the figures in the foreground of *The Offering* (Fig. 17) and the strikingly contemplative nature of Ethel Edwards as portrayed in *Portrait of an Artist* (Fig. 16).

Gonzalez provided a detailed description of his host, even offering an explanation for the expression on his face. "Picasso slowly smokes an American cigarette while his lips form a subtle smile. But whether it be a thought of

²⁶ Xavier Gonzalez, *Notes of Paris, visits with Picasso, etc. 1936-1937* (Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C., 1936-1937), 22.

²⁷ Edwards, December 10, 2008.

²⁸ Gonzalez, *Notes of Paris*, 39.

²⁹ Edwards, December 10, 2008.

forgiveness toward those who have for so long mocked his artistry, whether it was a mask to cover his sorrow for Spain, that is now his inspiration for [his] creativity, or whether it is the outwards manifestation of his insatiable curiosity, that I do not know.”³⁰ The references implied in this passage, obviously, are of the Spanish Civil War and Picasso’s work on *Guernica*, both of which were events contemporary with Gonzalez’s encounter with Picasso.

Picasso’s demeanor, as Gonzalez saw it, was friendly but reserved. In their second meeting, Picasso became much warmer. Gonzalez noted that Picasso, like himself, spoke with an Andalusian accent. That there was a personal bond became very clear when Picasso remarked, “as Spaniards from the South, [we] have much talent, a very lively imagination.”³¹ In Paris at the time, Gertrude Stein frequented the studios and gathering places of artists and was a patron and promoter of the artistic avant-garde. Stein expressed a related idea when she said to Gonzalez, “Only you Spaniards know how to do abstract art.”³² Stein was instrumental in fostering and promoting emerging artists within avant-garde circles, of whom Picasso was an early example.³³ In Gonzalez’s notes, Picasso asks, “What are you going to do in America? Stay here. You will see, [he said to me], you will see what Paris can do for you.”³⁴ Later, Stein told Gonzalez, “If you stay in Paris, I’ll make you bigger than

³⁰ Gonzalez, *Notes of Paris*, 44.

³¹ Ibid., 47.

³² The Art Students League of New York, *Xavier Gonzalez: A Memorial Exhibition, 1898-1993* (New York: The Art Students League Gallery, 1993), 27.

³³ Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) was an American writer who spent most of her life in France, and who became a catalyst in the development of modern art and literature. Throughout her lifetime, Stein cultivated relationships with well-known members of the artistic avant-garde and literary world.

³⁴ Gonzalez, *Notes of Paris*, 48.

Picasso.” “Unfortunately,” Gonzalez said with a grin, “I didn’t stay in Paris.”³⁵

Perhaps if he had, Gonzalez would have experienced similar fame and acclaim that Picasso and other artists within his circle enjoyed.

Picasso extended palpable kindness and genuine hospitality, according to Gonzalez’s notes. “Come back soon, come in the evening, come whenever you wish and bring your things.” When Gonzalez expressed his reluctance to show Picasso his efforts, Picasso told him, “Don’t worry, bring me everything, I am a good doctor.”³⁶ According to Patrick O’Brian in his biography of Picasso, “throughout all Picasso’s inconsistencies, there was a deep kindness and a great capacity for affection,” which showed also in the relationship to Gonzalez.³⁷

Unfortunately, Gonzalez’s notes are in some areas illegible or, even if legible, the context is unclear. One of the most vexing examples of lost information is contained in Gonzalez’s comment that in many of Picasso’s paintings he could see the source of inspiration or where Picasso’s ideas came from, though he does not specify which works he was actually shown. During their meeting, Picasso brought out a large painting, commenting that Derain would never show his work to other artists in such a setting.³⁸ The only other names that Gonzalez recorded were Goya, Juan Gris, and Gallo. Picasso’s comments on Gris, while brief, says much more about their complex relationship than is conveyed in standard biographical sources. As

³⁵ The Art Students League of New York, 26.

³⁶ Gonzalez, 53.

³⁷ Patrick O’Brian, *Picasso: A Biography*, (New York, W.W. Norton and Company, 1994), 67.

³⁸ André Derain (1880-1954) was a French painter, friend of Picasso’s and was associated with André Breton, founder of Surrealism. He was closely aligned with Henri Matisse and Fauvist painters, only later showing Cubist sympathies; he returned to the style of the Old Masters later in his career. Source: Albert E. Elsen, *Purposes of Art*, (New York: Holt, Rinehardt and Winston, Inc., 1967), 402.

Stein noted, “Juan Gris was the only painter Picasso wished away.”³⁹ The Spanish-born Gris was five years younger than Picasso. When he joined Picasso’s group in Paris, his admiration and respect for Picasso was made clear in his term of address, “cher maitre,”⁴⁰ a term used in French courts of law as a term of respect between lawyers and judges. Gris was a major painter of the Cubist style, like Picasso and Georges Braque. When some of Picasso’s most important and ardent admirers began praising Gris, Picasso uncharacteristically showed evidence of pique.⁴¹ He went to Stein demanding that she agree with him that Gris never painted an important picture. Picasso’s ire was further inflamed when Gris grew to favor Matisse, a Frenchman, over himself, a fellow Spaniard.⁴² Later in the notes, Picasso tells Gonzalez, “No, no. It was not only talent but hard, hard work and the life of misery in which he lived that killed him just when he was beginning to see.”⁴³ Yet it remains unclear from the notes who brought up Gris’s name, Gonzalez or Picasso.

Gonzalez summarized his observations on Picasso’s art in the following analysis: “The impression I received in his studio is that here was someone interested in...or discovering forms out of new materials, cardboard-paper and glue-pigments as pigments, graphic symbols – human gestures, a type of high-class sentimentalism – at times a Chopin, at times a Stravinsky.” He continued, “A sail moving by shifting winds, prophet of new emotions – creator of castles of cardboard, mirror of our times... of the elemental basis of painting that is the ability

³⁹ O’Brian, 108.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 109.

⁴¹ Ibid., 109.

⁴² Ibid., 113.

⁴³ Gonzalez, *Notes of Paris*, 89.

of making a mark on the surface, be it written or plastic form.”⁴⁴ Picasso would later be quoted as saying “The world today doesn’t make sense; so why should I paint pictures that do?”⁴⁵ Gonzalez’s work subtly mimics his own musings on Picasso, infusing bold color, Cubist features, and dramatic emotion, which may be seen in examples of his art later in this paper.

Gonzalez moved on in his notes to more humorous comments. For example, in one instance, Picasso said that he would like to offer Gonzalez some dates, but unfortunately the box containing the dates showed evidence of mice droppings. He explained that he had even hung the edibles by string from the ceiling, but the mice still left their calling cards. For this reason, Picasso pointed out that he had acquired two kittens romping about the studio sharpening their claws on the paintings scattered about. With mock seriousness, Gonzalez asked Picasso, “Do you think kittens have any respect for art?” Picasso responded, “None.”⁴⁶ Gonzalez’s question must have been prompted by the notion that he thought Picasso was like-minded. Neither artist had any use for pretentious opinions about art. O’Brian wrote that Picasso loathed art criticism, analysis, and verbal aesthetics.⁴⁷ Gonzalez himself shared this outlook, which complicated his calling as an art educator.

At one point in his notes, Gonzalez proposed a serious question framed as an observation to Picasso. Gonzalez said he had noticed no evidence of specific propaganda in Picasso’s paintings, while Picasso responded that he had never had

⁴⁴ Ibid., 92.

⁴⁵ O’Brian, 344.

⁴⁶ Gonzalez, *Notes of Paris*, 94.

⁴⁷ O’Brian, 288.

any interest in politics but now he could think of nothing else.⁴⁸ Had Gonzalez seen his *Guernica* (Fig. 12), completed in 1937, on exhibition? *Guernica* depicted the bombing of Guernica, Spain, by German bombers, on April 26, 1937, during the Spanish Civil War. The Spanish republican government commissioned Picasso to create a large mural for display at the 1937 World's Fair in Paris. *Guernica* showed the tragedies of war and the suffering inflicted upon individuals, and, in particular, the innocent civilians in the Basque capital. The monumental work has become a perpetual reminder of the tragedies of war, an anti-war symbol, and a plea for the keeping of peace. Upon completion, *Guernica* was displayed around the world in a brief tour, bringing the Spanish Civil War to global attention.

Guernica depicts suffering people, animals, and buildings wrenched by violence and chaos. Pictorial space is defined at the left by a wide-eyed bull which stands over a woman grieving over a dead child in her arms. In the center is a horse rearing in agony because of a large gaping wound. Below the horse is a dismembered soldier; his hand on a severed arm still grasps a broken sword from which a flower grows. The soldier's open palm reveals a wound like one of Christ's stigmata, a reference to Christian martyrdom. To the upper right of the horse, a frightened female figure holds out a candle from a window.

According to Beverly Ray in her recent article on the painting,⁴⁹ the following list of interpretations reflects the general consensus of art historians: The shape and posture of the bodies express protest. Picasso uses black, white, and grey

⁴⁸ Gonzalez, *Notes of Paris*, 101.

⁴⁹ Beverly Ray, "Analyzing Political Art to Get at Historical Fact: Guernica and the Spanish Civil War", *The Social Studies*. July/August 2006 (Washington D.C.: Heldref Publications, 2006): 168.

paint to set a somber mood and express pain and chaos. Flaming buildings and crumbling walls not only express the destruction of Guernica, but also reflect the destructive power of civil war. The newspaper print used in the painting reflects how Picasso learned of the massacre. The light bulb in the painting represents the sun. The broken sword near the bottom of the painting symbolizes the defeat of the people at the hand of their tormentors. Picasso had made hundreds of sketches and prepared numerous preliminary paintings of Guernica, though there is no mention of any of these works in Gonzalez's notes. In addition, the process of executing *Guernica* was meticulously documented by Dora Maar in a series of photographs taken in Picasso's studio in 1937 (Fig. 13). Gonzalez's encounter with Picasso coincided with the early phase of the *Guernica* project. Gonzalez's lack of writing on the subject was perhaps because he had deep personal opinions about the war, which he did not put on paper in a journal. He never mentions the Spanish Civil War in his notes, nor does he indicate that he had seen any of the preparatory works by Picasso leading up to *Guernica*. Yet, we do know that he was familiar with and thought about Guernica, as seen in the rendering of the figures in *The Offering*, discussed later in this paper.

Gonzalez's own works, however, were rarely political in nature; he instead focused on universal subjects, as seen in his watercolors and murals. Sometime after the meeting with Picasso, Gonzalez is rumored to have restored some of Picasso's original works.⁵⁰ Bruce Edwards strongly discouraged overemphasizing this episode. "From the notes it is obvious that Picasso, while agreeing to Gonzalez's

⁵⁰ Vincent Caire, "Xavier Gonzales and the New Orleans' Shushan Airport Murals", *Louisiana Cultural Vistas: History, Culture, Literature, Arts*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Winter 2006-07), 61.

request to meet him, considered this to be a one time event.” He goes on to explain: “Picasso was intrigued enough after his first meeting [with Gonzalez] to suggest that he come back with examples of his paintings. There are no value judgments expressed, even though Picasso was clearly impressed and encouraging. It is suggested [in Caire’s article] based on these notes that Picasso and Gonzalez had an extended relationship in which they shared ‘visions’ about art. None of this is documented and I feel it to be baseless, along with the possibility of Gonzalez restoring any of Picasso’s paintings, besides a minor touch-up of a frayed edge in the corner of *Guernica*.”⁵¹

⁵¹ Edwards, December 10, 2008.



Fig. 12 Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 349 cm. x 776 cm.
Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain.



Fig. 13 Dora Maar, *Picasso painting Guernica, state 4/5. Paris, Grands-Augustins studio, May-June 1937*. Gelatin silver photograph, 20.3 x 19.8 cm. Collection Dora Maar, Musée National Picasso, Paris, MP 1998-222.

Chapter 4: Gonzalez's Later Paintings

Another mural commission, but on a much smaller scale, was executed by Gonzalez in ca. 1939 for Dixie's Bar of Music on St. Charles Ave in New Orleans (Fig. 14). The Fasnacht sisters, Dixie and Irma, opened Dixie's Bar of Music in 1939. The house band included Dixie herself on clarinet, Judy Ertle on trumpet, Johnny Senec on bass, and Dorothy "Sloopy" Sloop on piano.⁵² Advertised as "New Orleans' Biggest Little Club," Dixie's became a favorite hangout of local and visiting national entertainers. In 1949, the club was moved to Bourbon Street in the French Quarter, where it remained a popular spot until it closed in the late 1960s.

At the suggestion of Louisiana author and regular club patron Lyle Saxon, the Fasnachts commissioned Gonzalez to paint a jazz mural for Dixie's Bar of Music. The painting's narrative is set in the different locales of New York, the Midwest, New Orleans, and Hollywood. Gonzalez included sixty-six characterizations of jazz performers and entertainers of the day. Among the recognizable luminaries are Lena Horne, Xavier Cugat, Louis Prima, Benny Goodman, Dorothy Lamour, and, with pen and sketch pad in hand, Salvador Dali. The mural also bears the autographs of celebrated visitors to the bar. When the bar relocated to the French Quarter, the mural was cut by approximately four feet to accommodate the new space.⁵³

Gonzalez worked in different media depending on the seasons of the year. His watercolors, typically painted in summer, glow with intuitive improvisation and emotional use of color, space, and texture as he interprets, rather than reports, the

⁵² Louisiana State Museum, Accession file no. 1978.061, *Dixie's Bar*.

⁵³ Ibid.

facts of water, earth, grass, and boats. By contrast, his oil paintings of the same period, such as *The Ram's Head* (Fig. 15) and *Portrait of an Artist* (Fig. 16) show the evolution of Gonzalez's art over the World War II year.

Gonzalez's *Portrait of an Artist* received an honorable mention in the Carnegie Institute's sixth competition for *Paintings in the United States*, where it was acclaimed as "a distinguished canvas, completely realized in arrangement, color and sound figure painting."⁵⁴ One of three hundred works selected for the show, the painting depicts Gonzalez's wife, Ethel Edwards. The composition seems to be influenced by Asian art. Edwards' hairstyle and the style of her blouse make reference to the couple's recent visit to Japan in 1947. Gonzalez and Edwards had traveled for leisure and shared a love for Japan, whose landscape, people, and culture fascinated them. Edwards' beret, however, reminds the viewer of her Western roots.

The focus of the painting is on Edwards as an artist in her own right. Surrounded by drawings and sketches tacked up on the wall, she rests her hand on her sketchbook while gazing toward a canvas barely visible in the right foreground. A bird skull lies on the sketchbook, perhaps part of the subject matter of a recently executed drawing or the work on the canvas before her. The skull is similar in subject to the work of Southwestern painter Georgia O'Keeffe. Gonzalez almost crams the full-length portrait into a box-like space, tilting the sitter's body forward slightly in a way that is almost claustrophobic. Some of the geometric qualities

⁵⁴ Peyton Boswell, Jr., ed., *The Art Digest: The News Magazine of Art*, vol. 23, no. 2 (New York: The Art Digest, Inc., October 15, 1948): 9.

inherent in the treatment of Edwards' blouse reveal the influence of American Regionalism, and, at one step removed, Cubism. Edwards' work often mimicked that of her husband, an example of which could be the large painting hanging behind her in the portrait.

Asked to explain *The Ram's Head*, Gonzalez obliged by saying he began with the skull of the ram with its symbolic implications of the tragedy of death and then applied the tragic motif in the form of eyesocket and teeth throughout the rest of the picture. This motif may be seen in the sculpture at the right of the canvas, as well as the canvas within the canvas in the center. He would not venture beyond this statement.⁵⁵ Any other observation one has to extrapolate from the painting itself. The composition makes the viewer think he or she has stumbled into the artist's studio in the midst of the execution of a canvas. The central focus, the painting of the skull on the easel, features broken geometric planes typical of Cubist art. Oddly, the studio is almost an outdoor setting, with trees visible on the righthand side of the canvas. The bones also make reference to the work of O'Keefe, whose compositions often included animal skull motifs. The building in the left background of the painting, which is seen through a doorway, is likely a church near Gonzalez's studio in New York.

Gonzalez never made any comment on the meaning of *The Offering* (Fig. 17) either, other than that observers may read into the work a folk-religion episode.⁵⁶ Every aspect of this painting is charged with symbolic meaning, which integrates

⁵⁵ Pearson, 126.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 126.

with the form. Two figures kneel in the foreground of the composition, arms outstretched above their bodies, mourn in front of a man bearing a resemblance to Christ, encased in glass. The male figure on the right strikes a pose related to that of a figure at the far right of Picasso's *Guernica*, providing evidence that Gonzalez was familiar with Picasso's masterwork and used parts of it as inspiration for his own composition. As opposed to *Guernica*, however, the painting references Christian Lamentation iconography, as interpreted by Spanish Catholicism. The body in the glass coffin has shaggy, unkempt hair, upon which a crown of thorns sits, identifying him as Christ. Yet the glass case is broken into parts such that it appears that the "offering" is to paintings on canvas of Christ and not to his actual bodily existence.

Beginning in the late 1940s into the early 1950s, Gonzalez's works increasingly depart from the Regionalist stylistic paradigm. An examination of these works, though varied in media, subject matter, and style, allows for a greater understanding of his influences, including, but not limited to, Cubism and Surrealism. In addition, his works in watercolor, large scale murals, and other media contributed to his growth as an artist and included themes of heightened emotion and historical reference, as well as human situation.

In the mid 1950s, Gonzalez wrote down and published in a small pamphlet his philosophies about painting, art and life. These were his *Notes About Painting*, which appeared in 1955 in Cleveland, Ohio. A key passage from this treatise states: "I do not read about painting, but I sometimes write. To read about painting, or art, is

unbearable to me.”⁵⁷ According to critic Ralph M. Pearson, “a statement like this can come logically from a dynamo busily engaged in its allotted task of generating electrical current; quite naturally it has no time to pause and absorb competing or even supplementary currents. Gonzalez, the evidence indicates, is such a dynamo.”⁵⁸

Gonzalez continues:

When a painter paints he repeats continuous acts of humility; it is like writing about our own incompetence since we feel we can think more than we can do...The struggle to give form to emotions and our efforts to crystallize an idea are never realized. We must be content with something else, something that appears instead.

Picasso has said the same in different words:

A picture is not thought out and settled beforehand. While it is being done it changes as one's thoughts change. And when it is finished it still goes on changing, according to the state of mind of whoever is looking at it. A picture lives a life like a living creature, undergoing the changes imposed from day to day. This is natural enough, as the picture lives only through the man who is looking at it.⁵⁹

Gonzalez further explained that “the naturalism of form will be transformed into the realism of painting even if our newly acquired realism has no apparent likeness to our preconceived concept of nature.”⁶⁰ Gonzalez believed that naturalism, as this notion goes, will be transformed into a reality created by the artist; he thought that reality may be different from the nature familiar to us. Gonzalez's musings come across as simple yet effective statements; proving again that outstanding artists know what they are about and, on occasion, that they can put their knowledge into words as well as paint or pastel.

⁵⁷ Xavier Gonzalez, *Notes About Painting* (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Co., 1955), 2.

⁵⁸ Pearson, 123.

⁵⁹ *Picasso on Art: A Selection of Views*, Dore Ashton, ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 1988), 27.

⁶⁰ Gonzalez, *Notes About Painting*, 5.

Gonzalez and Picasso were both prolific painters, sometimes creating multiple versions of the same subject. Picasso's *Guernica* went through hundreds of sketches and preparatory paintings before its final product emerged. Gonzalez would draw and paint the same subject multiple times, as can be seen in his harbor scene watercolors. It is their similar views on making art, that form follows nature, which produced their ever-evolving oeuvres.

Later in 1948, Gonzalez obtained another prize for his work, this time in watercolor. *Rock Harbor* (Fig. 18) was accorded the Dana Watercolor Medal from the 46th Annual Exhibition of Water Colors and Prints sponsored by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Philadelphia Water Color Club. Hosted by the Academy, the show was primarily a venue organized for and by artists.⁶¹ *Rock Harbor* was located near Gonzalez's Wellfleet studio in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. He and his wife spent summers in Wellfleet, and Gonzalez's work executed during their time there typically reflects the local landscape. Gonzalez's submission was strongly influenced by contemporary color and design theories of figurative modernism, while still embracing the structural geometry of Cubism.⁶² Figurative simplification is complemented by a compact organization. The boats in the center of the composition are comprised of many shapes, which create a jumble of masts and rigging, making it difficult for the viewer to determine the actual number of boats depicted. The Cubist slant likely comes from Gonzalez's continued admiration of Picasso, as well as his time spent with the artist in France in years

⁶¹ Peyton Boswell, Jr., ed., *The Art Digest: The News Magazine of Art*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (New York: The Art Digest Inc., November 15, 1948), 26.

⁶² Ibid.

prior. The boats in the painting likely reflect the fishing culture of Wellfleet during this time, which was the primary industry in the village.

Continuing with a nautical theme, Gonzalez received First Honorable Mention from the Eighty-Second Annual Exhibition of the American Water Color Society at the National Academy Galleries for his *Steamboat* (Fig. 19).⁶³ A realist subject enriched by fantastic overtones, *Steamboat* retains a hint of Cubist influence, yet, the Cubist legacy is not as pronounced as in *Rock Harbor*. The painting's theme is in the Romantic tradition: decay and the passage of time, as suggested by the tall, modernist, mid-twentieth-century edifices in the background, which serve as foils to the deteriorating steamboat. In comparison to the primitive sailing boats in *Rock Harbor*, the steamboat demonstrates a once-popular method of transport now romanticized. A sleepy and gentle harbor scene conveys a tranquil time of rest and simplicity likened to nostalgic reminiscing, while the paddlewheel agitates the otherwise placid surface of the water.

In an exhibition for the Martin Widdifield Gallery in 1956, Gonzalez and his wife Ethel Edwards exhibited their works side by side. Her *Asclepias* (Fig. 20) features the plant more commonly named milkweed executed with bold strokes and harsh lines, creating a geometricized depiction of a stem and leaves. Edwards mirrors her husband's own use of sharply delineated outlines in his *Harbor* (Fig. 21). Much like his previous watercolor scenes from Wellfleet, Gonzalez interprets the boats geometrically.

⁶³ Peyton Boswell, Jr., ed., *The Art Digest: The News Magazine of Art*, Vol. 23, No. 9, (New York: The Art Digest, Inc., February 1, 1949), 21.



Fig. 14 Xavier Gonzalez, *Dixie's Bar*, c.1939. Oil on canvas, 35 feet x 5 feet, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana. Photo: Louisiana State Museum.

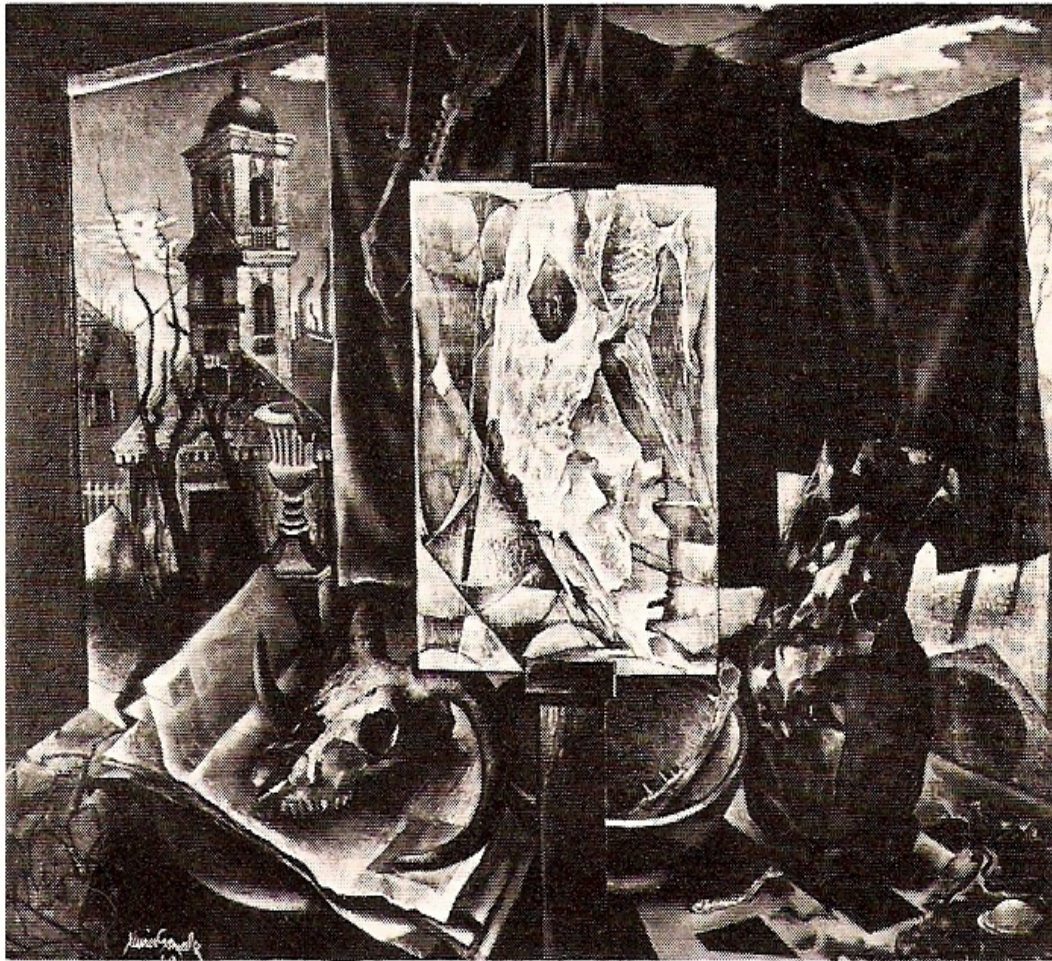


Fig. 15 Xavier Gonzalez, *The Ram's Head*, 1948. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, location unknown. Image: *The Modern Renaissance in American Art: Presenting the Work and Philosophy of 54 Distinguished Artists*.



Fig. 16 Xavier Gonzalez, *Portrait of an Artist*, 1948. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, location unknown. Image: private collection of Bruce Edwards.



Fig. 17 Xavier Gonzalez, *The Offering*, 1952. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, location unknown. Image: *The Modern Renaissance in American Art: Presenting the Work and Philosophy of 54 Distinguished Artists*.

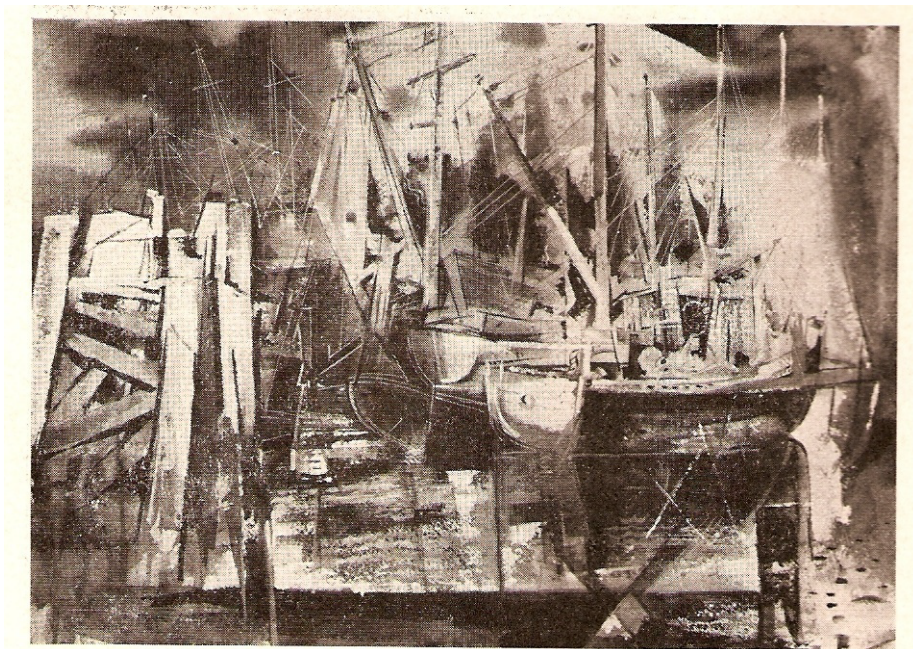


Fig. 18 Xavier Gonzalez, *Rock Harbor*, 1948. Watercolor, dimensions unknown, location unknown. Image: *The Art Digest: The News Magazine of Art*, Vol. 23, No. 4.

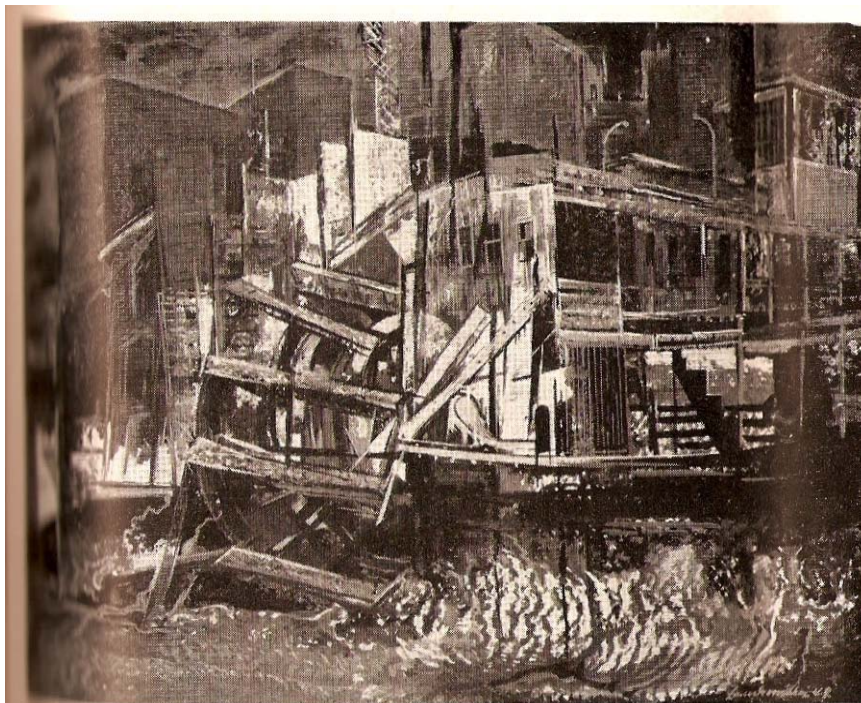


Fig. 19 Xavier Gonzalez, *Steamboat*, 1948. Watercolor, dimensions unknown, location unknown. Image: *The Art Digest: The News Magazine of Art*, Vol. 23, No. 9.



Fig. 20 Ethel Edwards, *Asclepias*, 1956. Oil on canvas, 20 inches x 30 inches, location unknown. Photo: Martin Widdifield Gallery.

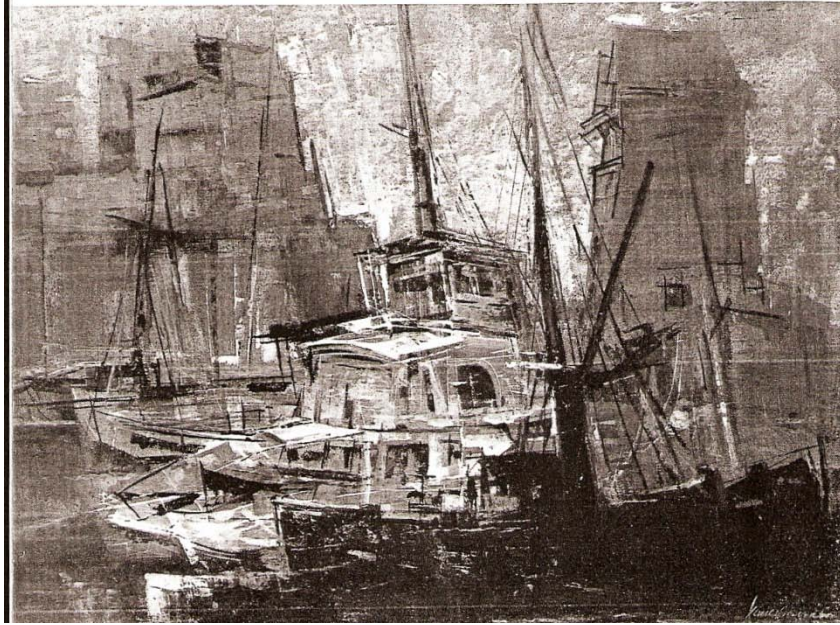


Fig. 21 Xavier Gonzalez, Harbor, 1950. Watercolor, 22 inches x 30 inches, location unknown. Photo: Martin Widdifield Gallery.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Xavier Gonzalez, an artist influenced by Mexican mural painting, Cubism and American Regionalism, brought mid-twentieth century modernist aesthetics to the state of Louisiana. His early murals in New Orleans, executed following a move to Tulane University from Texas, enhanced his status as both a painter and an art leader. Gonzalez's notes from his encounters with Picasso in 1936-1937 reveal smaller details from this very period in both artists' biographies, and provide insight into their philosophies about art and life. *Guernica*, in particular, presents an example of a highly politicized, public painting that Gonzalez was aware of, but which he merely referred to in his own body of work. A Spaniard like Picasso, Gonzalez surely had his own ideas and opinions regarding the politics and ensuing conflict in Spain, but elected to stay out of politics. Gonzalez's later works illustrate the breadth of subject matter he explored, specifically portraits and harbor scenes, which often blend the American Regionalist style with Surrealist overtones. Though largely ignored by art historians up to this date, Gonzalez's oeuvre deserves to be explored in greater depth. This thesis is intended to provide a starting point for continued research regarding the work of Gonzalez and his contribution to modernism in Louisiana and the art world at large.

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Vita

A native of Oceanside, California, Erika Katayama has made Louisiana her home since 2005. She received her undergraduate degree in art history from the University of California at Santa Cruz in 2002, with a minor in education. Miss Katayama has worked in museums for over ten years, including the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution, Museum of Art & History at the McPherson Center in Santa Cruz, California, the Louisiana State Museum in Baton Rouge, and the LSU Museum of Art. Her experience has been in varying departments, including education, curatorial, exhibits, and collections management. While at LSU, Miss Katayama studied modern and contemporary art under Professors Darius Spieth and Susan Ryan. Currently, she is employed as the Registrar at the LSU Museum of Art.